

You are your house: The construction and continuity of family and identity using yag in a Japanese suburban farming community

Thompson, Christopher S, author

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Abstrak

This paper examines the persistent use of yag, or house names, in one small agricultural township in northeastern Japan. In Twa-ch, yag help differentiate local households by facilitating for families a distinctive identity and a historical continuity that helps them address change. One might have expected modernization to have rendered yag obsolete. But to the contrary, ethnographic observation in Twa-ch reveals that yag serve a myriad functions that are making their use more popular than ever. By analysing the history, development and contemporary use of yag in this suburban Iwate prefecture farm community, this paper explains how house names help local residents to contest the anomie and social fragmentation that has become a part of their post-modern lifestyle.